Houdini and The Space Cuckoos

By Joseph Lidster

Part Two

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The last thing Harry Houdini heard as the purple-eyed reporters pushed them both to the ground was the Doctor shrieking out his name. Suddenly, he remembered his training, his tricks, the way he could escape from anything. Sure, they were surrounded by what seemed like hundreds of possessed, angry men but all he needed to do was treat all this like one of his shows. The man gripping his wrists was merely a set of handcuffs. The others, surrounding and grabbing at him, were just a set of chains or a straitjacket.

He stopped struggling and focussed his mind.

All he needed to do was calmly twist that way, gently turn this way, move that arm over there and... he was free! He pushed through the reporters, grabbed the Doctor's arm and pulled him up.

'Run?' he asked.

'Run!' the Doctor replied.

And so they ran. The streets of New York were alive with motor cars. Tall buildings towered over them. 'So, what did they want?' Harry asked the Doctor.

The Doctor was fiddling with a strange metal device that glowed at one end as he ran. 'Me, I'd guess.'

'Why?' asked Harry as they ran into a park, pigeons scattering at their feet. 'Were they going to kill us?'

'I'd imagine so,' the Doctor replied, pointing the device up into the sky.

'Right. Look, sorry but what is that?' asked Harry, pointing at the Doctor's metal... thing.

'You were a stage magician once – didn't you ever use a wand? This is mine – the sonic screwdriver!'

The device emitted a loud piercing shriek.

'Right, the spaceship is definitely in orbit above New York but they've got to have a base of operations down here. Now where is it?'

Harry shook his head. 'Who are they? These aliens? Why do they want to possess people?'

The Doctor fiddled with his bow-tie as he spoke. 'They're called the Cuculus.'

'That's Latin for Cuckoo' said Harry.

'Exactly! They're Space Cuckoos!'

Harry just stared at him. Then he blinked. 'Space Cuckoos?'

'You know how cuckoos lay their eggs in nests belonging to other birds? Well, the Cuculus do the same. They fly around from planet to planet, beaming their individual consciousnesses into the minds of the inhabitants on each of those planets.'

'So they're like... invading Martians?'

The Doctor shook his head. 'Not Martians. Cuculus. The Martians are *reptilian*! No, the Cuculus are giant birds, obviously.'

'Obviously.'

'And they don't want to invade. They just want to live.'

'So, no heat-rays? They're not killing people? That's not so bad then...'

'Try telling that to those reporters who've been possessed! They've got wives and kids and deadlines! Only now, they don't because they're possessed! Their minds have been taken over by-'

'Big alien Space Cuckoos?' asked Harry.

'Exactly, Harry,' the Doctor replied. 'See, I knew you'd get it!'

Suddenly he strode off and Harry ran after him. 'So what are we going to do?'

'Stop them' said the Doctor. 'They've got a giant psychic crystal that they use to transfer their minds into the bodies of the people they take over. So we're going to smash it!' The Doctor's face broke into a huge grin. 'Big old smash, I can't wait! Ooh, hello!' The Doctor, babbling away, had bumped into a surprisingly-tall policeman. The Doctor's eyes were level with the policeman's chest. The policeman, though, had his own eyes closed. Harry could guess what he'd see when he opened them.

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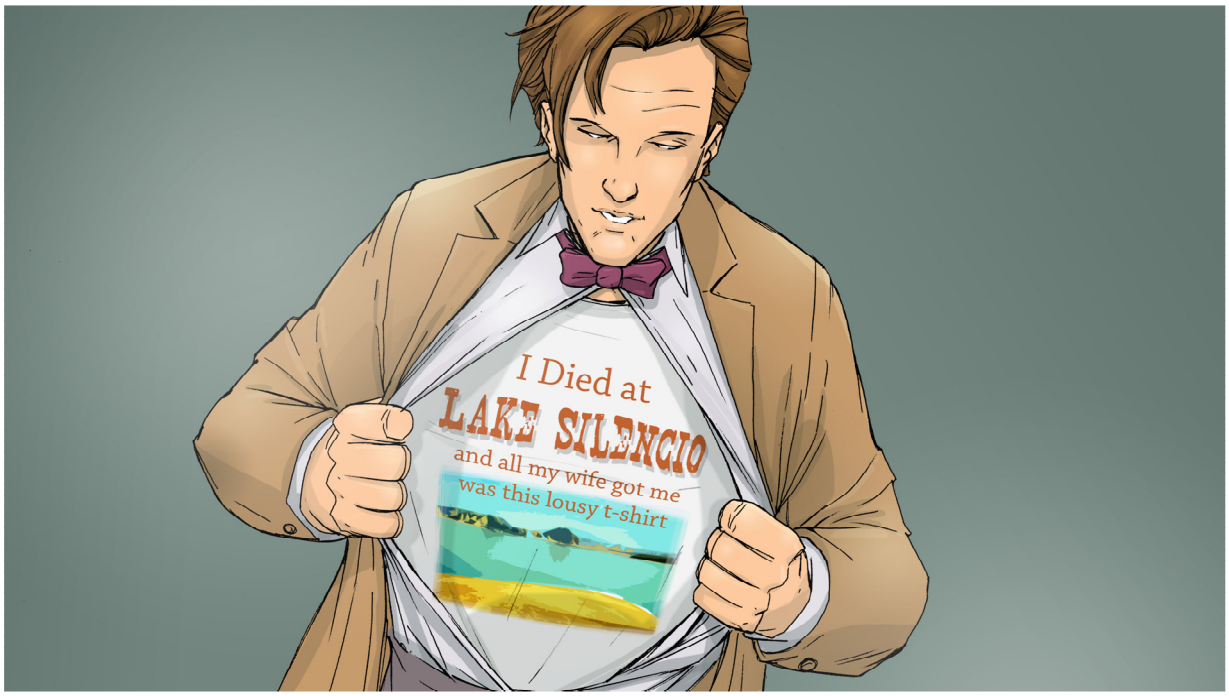
'Hello, officer,' said the Doctor. 'I don't suppose you're any good with directions?'

'Where would you like directions to?' replied the policeman.

'Oh, to the Cuculus's base of operations here in the city? Because I'm giving you a chance here. Take me there peacefully and I'll find a way to save your race. Anything else and I'll stop you however I can.'

The policeman opened his eyes. Of course, they were glowing purple.

'Doctor!' he hissed, looking down at the smaller man. 'It's time for you to die.'



'Been there, done that. Bought the t-shirt.' The Doctor ripped open his shirt to reveal that he was indeed wearing a t-shirt with *I died at Lake Silencio and all my wife got me was this lousy t-shirt* written on it. The policeman stared at it, momentarily confused, before raising a gun.

'Harry?' said the Doctor.

'Run?' replied Harry.

The Doctor nodded before bolting off again. Harry followed then jumped as the policeman fired his pistol at them! The sound of the bullets sent beggars, workmen and pigeons scattering. They ran out of the park and down another side-street.

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'Haven't you got any weapons?' Harry asked, turning to the Doctor as they stopped to catch their breath.

'No, I don't!' The Doctor sounded furious at the suggestion. Suddenly a horse and carriage came bolting down into the alley towards them!

'Stop,' shouted Harry, stepping into its path and waving his arms at the carriage.

But the carriage didn't slow down and it was at that moment that Harry realised there was no driver. He looked up at the galloping horse. Straight into its purple eyes.

'It's one of them,' he exclaimed, grabbing the Doctor and pulling him toward the other end of the alley. 'The horse is possessed!'

Coming Soon: Part Three.

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